

## ALL SURVEY COMMENTS

### Profitability

<u>Order of Importance</u>	<u>Weighted Total</u>
Access to Markets	268
Labor Availability	242
Liability and Insurance	199
Education, Public Relations, Promotions	192
Taxes	187
Other	82

#### *Comments under Access to Markets:*

- A port or barge facility for soybeans and the promotion of renewable fuels.
- Stop Chinese imports.
- ADMs export facility was a tremendous advantage to MD producers until it collapsed and closed. Having another export facility through the Chesapeake Bay would be significant. Have MDA work with the 4 remaining livestock auctions —i.e., State Graded Cattle Feeder Auctions.
- Important to grow markets for all types of agriculture.
- Better coordination of MDA efforts w/local campaigns and direct-market outlets, farmer markets, farmer stands, etc. MDA needs to promote Ag E-Commerce.
- Educational programs by extension on treating farming as a business. Work w/ Economic Development to identify, secure, and create markets for locally produced ag products.
- Ensuring a market is most important to profits, but I might also say a stable pricing system and guaranteed market would go along with that.
- Farmers need to be able to sell their products where it will be most profitable. It is also important that they are aware of all options available to them, as well as better practices.
- We are a winery. The felony law which Maryland has for anyone caught shipping wine into Maryland causes other States to not allow shipping of wine into their States. This plus limits on Internet sales severely affects sales outside of Maryland.
- Need greater investment in domestic and international markets. Build corporate partnerships for product development and R and D.
- Traditional producers need the Port of Baltimore as one additional market for exporting grain. [repeated comment] That additional demand for grain products also needs to be considered and developed in the region.
- Need local county terminals; then transport tractor-trailers to buyer locations.
- More proactive and aggressive marketing efforts well coordinated among state agencies, additional staff.
- Maintain & develop the necessary infrastructure in all necessary forms to move farm products to markets.
- Increase assistance and incentives to improve opportunities for entrepreneurs and direct marketers.
- An effective PR marketing campaign to educate citizens on the importance of supporting locally grown produce and preserve farmland would be important.
- Direct access and farm sales directly to farmer need to be optimized to cut out middleman.
- We need a grain shipping facility in the Port of Baltimore.

#### *Comments under Labor Availability:*

- Have favorable immigration laws to ensure farm workers are available and ensure decent standards of living for farm workers.
- Horticulture needs a stable, reliable workforce. Unavailable labor results in unfulfilled business opportunities. The industry has become dependent on seasonal foreign labor—we must continue to work with Federal and State legislators to help them understand how critical this issue is.

- Markets for our grain and other commodities.
- Work on migrant labor regulations and migrant labor housing laws.
- Immigration Issues/Laws
- Subsidize (through tax treatment) farm labor costs. Get some similar treatment for migrant labor as they are getting in the seafood industry.

*Comments under Liability and Insurance:*

- Workers comp insurance has increased as much as 33 %, and many insurance companies are not renewing fire and liability policies for farmers.
- The high cost of insurance is a drain on the farmer's bottom line.
- Government needs to help farmers with cost of liability insurance.
- Reduce health care costs—farmers' age demographic is getting older all the time. Insurance costs for people self-employed and over 50 are extremely high. They take a large portion of our income. Possible solutions—larger group benefits, government subsidized rates similar to crop insurance, receiving Medicare coverage at younger age.

*Comments under Education, Public Relations, and Promotions:*

- Re-open Baltimore Harbor; organize in Maryland to distribute to local markets in Maryland (Wal-Mart, Giant, Acme, etc.).
- Building awareness of the value of agriculture can help build profitability. Consumers are voters and help to make decisions that directly impact farm income and profits. Knowledgeable voters are more likely to vote for and support issues in favor of farmers and open space.
- As an emerging ag industry, the emu people need to educate the public about our "new" products. Our most important and most successful venue was taken away from the MD Emu Association, when we (and all commodities) were excluded from the Ag building at the MD State Fair.
- Convince media news to solicit rural news.
- The non-farm population must know what the average farmer and his allied industries have at risk and be willing to support them in many ways.
- Help diversify.
- Encourage people to buy local produce.
- Marketing Maryland agriculture food products, especially if the produce, organic will help boost profits. Developing special crops for particular markets is a way to increase profitability.

*Comments under Taxes:*

- Lower our taxes—we are not competitive with farmers in other states (VA, PA, WV).
- Crop insurance is o.k., but health and regular insurance costs are extremely high. Our overhead continues to grow with not equal value of crops.
- Minimize taxes and costs associated with government-mandated programs.

*Comments under Other:*

- Availability of support like equipment & fertilizer dealers. Viability of Support Industries. [repeated comment]
- Regulations: Reduce regulatory burden. [repeated comment]
- Commodity prices: need more markets besides chicken for corn and beans.
- Government Intrusion: reduce the costs of complying with needless government laws and regulations.
- Inability to Compete: Legislative support for expanded gaming with a percentage of revenue directed to incentive breeding funds and purse enhancements.
- Regulation: Agriculture is not the only segment of our citizens to be regulated for the environment. All Marylanders need to do their part. The Metropolitan media likes to always blame farmers.

- Regulations: Government regulatory burdens have discouraged growers more than any other single factor.
- Availability of Land: Without land most farmers cannot survive! The next generation cannot afford to purchase and farm land. Preservation and tax credits could possibly help.
- Regulation of farming: don't impose costs on farming.
- Pressure to develop.
- Prices: Twenty-year-old grain prices have forced farmers to produce more, increasing equipment and supply prices. Why not stop programs and pay realistic prices?

*General Comments:*

- The appalling lack of understanding of the importance of Agriculture by the inhabitants of MD and for too many of their elected representatives in Annapolis is a reality that has to be confronted and changed. Constitutional Amendment: Each year, prior to the convening of the Maryland General Assembly, every Delegate and Senator shall review and consider, the **Top Ten Essential Factors on the Critical Importance of Agriculture in the State of Maryland**; as prepared on a form (updated annually) by the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Following review of same, every Delegate and Senator, shall execute their signature and date, on said form, signifying their having received same. A copy of the executed form shall be filed with the Secretary of State. (Prior to 9-11 I would not have dreamed of suggesting something like this).
- My main concern is to keep agriculture profitable for the future generations. I feel if the profit incentive exists would-be young farmers will find ways to overcome the other hurdles (working with county extension persons, FSA, Farm Credit, NRCS, Soil Conservation, etc.)
- The horse industry is heavily regulated by the State so it needs comprehensive support and access to programs that will make it regionally competitive.
- It is a constant battle especially in Montgomery County where the county council is mostly anti-ag. And small business, etc. They don't seem to realize how the farmers struggle to keep farming.
- MDA needs to be a strong advocate for all MD agriculture.
- Help farms in transition; H2A and H2B.
- MD should start the process of supporting its agriculture base through increased payments for conservation easements and BMPs (green payments).
- Many of today's issues relate to communication problems and the "under-informed." This includes land-use, farmer's rights, product values, education, promotion and marketing.
- Urbanization of Maryland; Legislation (National) is limiting a free economy.

## Land Use Management

<u>Order of Importance</u>	<u>Weighted Total</u>
Land Availability and Preservation	309
Planning and Zoning Regulations	274
Environmental Regulations	238
Right to Farm Laws	209
Water Usage	161
Other	19

### *Comments under Land Availability and Preservation:*

- Land is being sold & developed at an alarming rate. [repeated comment]. Profit for young farmers would really help, however, development prices for land make it unavailable to them.
- Development increases the value of land when trying to acquire additional land or for first time farm buyers (beginning farmers). Price for land is too expensive and the payback is too great. Land preservation is a good program, but the restrictions are too much and little funding from the State doesn't help the farm community.
- County needs to enhance the TDR program and any other program to encourage farmers not to sell the land.
- It's very hard to farm around Houses—important to keep ag land in big chunks.
- What is the use to preserve land if there are no farmers to work the land. In order to preserve agriculture we need to have kids willing to farm, they need income to support their families. We as farmers are asked to “give up” things for “open space.” We need to be compensated. The Dairy industry needs a market (Maryland milk) funding for our own processing. Plant would be better money spent, than just buying land. “Ag Viability”
- To keep the ag industry viable you must protect and maintain the industry resources needed for production (land, water, the farmers that work the land). Lose the land and the other two don't matter.
- There will be no land on the shore to farm. Developers are pricing land out of reach for young and old farmers.
- To protect existing agriculture, future development must be slowed. Young farmers need to see a profit potential to purchase/maintain land that is already in ag preservation. Local planning and zoning regulations need to reflect agriculture priorities if they want agriculture in that county. Right to farm laws are a must and must be enforced to allow agriculture to exist.
- I think land availability is No. 1 especially in light of keeping/attracting younger farmers in the industry. My husband would like to buy a farm on his own, but many are too small with too high a price tag. Renting ground is not an option because that land is only around until it is developed. Right to farm laws goes to the population's understanding and acceptance of our business.
- When the land is all growing houses, we won't have ag issues to address! Smaller parcels in ag use should be eligible for preservation. Smaller parcels should have fewer restrictions, not more, than large parcels.
- Provide grants to farmers who want to buy land and will sell an easement.
- Without the land, there are no farms—but land preservation does not equal farmer preservation. Each new regulation adds to the cost of doing business and we must stop piling on.
- Urban sprawl has taken most productive farmland. [repeated comment]
- Once farmland is taken out of production it is lost forever. Continue land preservation easements. Slow down on amount of clear land being planted to trees or grass programs. Make sure they are beneficial to the environment where they are located.
- Increase funds for preservation and sale of easements; mentoring program should be established to link young farmers with older & more established farmers (farm transition center idea); and strengthen right to farm laws.

- Without a land base protected for agriculture, eventually there will be no agribusiness industry. Competitive uses for land (which is a commodity in itself) will displace agriculture; the single-most disastrous happenstance that could befall the State of Maryland. Purchase of farm easements and protective zoning (bonafide agricultural zones) operating together are proven tools that work.
- Land availability and planning and zoning determine a county's commitment to its agricultural future. A public policy for designated ag-zoned areas with adequate funding for permanent land protection programs is a must.
- A shrinking Ag land base forces farming on smaller dispersed lands. Reduces productivity.
- Because the returns to farming can't match the returns to development. Need to buy the development rights.
- Cost of land due to pressure from sprawl development is increasing and making it hard for farmers to afford land.
- Continued affordability of farmland; consider statewide land use policy for prime agricultural lands (regulatory).
- Put all \$ back into MALPF and more. Stop pulling regs that will discourage landowners from participating in MALPF.
- The rising value of land for non-agricultural uses (development) threatens the farm industry more than any other factor. Farmland must be preserved in a way that is fair to farmers and which allows them to keep farming at a profit.

*Comments under Planning and Zoning Regulations:*

- We need to protect pockets of agriculture from development through aggressive farmland preservation and also to address the rural/suburban conflicts that may arise from sprawl in ag areas.
- Planning & zoning control property use, affordability, open space, and other areas critical for sustaining or eliminating farm enterprises.
- P & Z affects many of the others on the list. It is important for government to limit urban sprawl, allowing agriculture production to occur without the increased stress of traffic.
- Regulations need to be friendly to farmers and take into consideration the nature of an agriculture industry as pure competition. This will require greater sensitivity to the economics of farming.
- Farmers are treated like second-class citizens when it comes to their land. Over regulation is always a problem.
- Agriculture should be part of every community, not just in rural sectors. All taxpayers should benefit from the quality of life that agriculture adds, beyond the mere preservation of land or open space.
- Outdated zoning laws and restrictive zoning laws impede establishment of new wineries and expansion of existing ones.
- Regulations need to be friendly to farmers and take into consideration the nature of an agriculture industry as pure competition. This will require greater sensitivity to the economics of farming.
- Counties need assistance from the state on how much agricultural land they need to set aside/preserve through strong agricultural zoning and land use plans. Perhaps the state could determine the minimum # of acres needed statewide or regionally and develop regional plans involving working with the counties to ensure that local groups & plans are sufficient to preserve this minimum # of acres. Counties need informed guidance on this issue, otherwise, they will not be able to plan adequately for supporting the ag industry.

*Comments under Environmental Regulations:*

- All levels of government have the ability to require farmers to do things that cost money regardless of the impact on farm profitability or ability to pay. Some governments believe that family farms should have the same industrial-strength permits & paperwork requirements & penalties as large industrial operations. These threaten the continuation of farming.

- Apply nutrient management regulations only to farms that have excess manure.
- Too many restrictions. We need better ways to control non-point source pollution that addresses the needs of farmers while also increasing use of BMPs for water quality.
- Unlike other businesses or industries, farmers do not have the ability to pass increased costs associated with Environmental Regulations on to their customers. If agriculture is a statewide priority that benefits every citizen, then greater assistance, which limits their liability and financial exposure, must be provided to producers.
- Regulations disproportionately aimed at farmers without adequate compensation. Environmental and preservation programs are under funded.

*Comments under Right to Farm Laws:*

- People moving to rural areas ignorant of ag practices. Complaints generate new regulations, which add costs to farming that cannot be passed onto the consumer.
- Getting the public to accept farming practices.

*Comments under Water Usage:*

- Access to a quality water supply that will not be restricted coupled with conservation incentives.
- With the surge of development in Maryland, there is increased demand for water. Much of the development is taking place in traditionally rural areas, where many nursery growers are established. When water becomes short, ag need becomes subordinate to municipal need creating issue for growers. We need right to farm laws, but also guaranteed of water access, despite the influx of development.

*Comments under Other:*

- Traffic & neighbors: the more population, the harder to move equipment, etc.
- Development Pressure: Legislature to support incentives to maintain land for agricultural use. Expand and update preservation programs.
- Dollar return per acre.
- Land Values vs. Profits.

*General Comments:*

- The problem of overcrowded roads and trying to move slow moving farm equipment on them.
- If the price of land keeps going up & development pressure keeps increasing will be no land to farm in 20 years.
- County land use decisions have significant effects on farming. County officials need to understand this and why profitable farms are in their communities best interests—environment, government costs, crowded roads, schools, etc.
- Regulations, reporting forms, and other time-consuming restrictions all adversely affect productivity. There is a serious shortage of MDA staff available to assist farmers with programs. How will you get conservation on the ground without the technical support to help farmers.
- Availability of farmland to young or beginning farmers—just starting out you can't buy farmland—there are too many expenses. You rely on renting, and without a reputation it is extremely hard to convince landlords to rent to you when there are plenty of reputable farmers established. There needs to be some type of government program to assist farmers in obtaining land. Maybe tax credits or incentives for landlords who rent to them or subsidized rental agreements so they can get more money by renting to beginners.
- There has to be a comprehensive policy on growth in relation to the effect it causes on agriculture and maintaining agriculture as a viable industry in Maryland.

- Maryland agriculture must confront and handle its share of the responsibility for water quality. It is certainly not the only source of the problem, but it is an important component. Only the farmers themselves can take the steps necessary to reduce nutrient runoff, and only the State can compel these measures when farmers won't cooperate.
- Seems as though farmers are always fighting regulations imposed by the State or increased fees imposed by the State (getting rid of sales tax exemption increased inspection fees). Lawyers should understand how they affect the farmers before trying to impose these regulations and laws.
- Preservation of farmland from development is the most important thing. I would stop taking money from the transfer tax for the general fund and put it back in programs for open space.
- All Eastern Shore counties need local land preservation programs to complement MALPF. Cecil and Queen Anne's need better rural zoning standards.
- Where is water supply a critical constraint for ag, or likely to become so in the near future?
- Local politicians need to be more in tune to the need to keep farmland. State legislators should mandate ag districts and use incentives to maintain and add to the districts.
- The disappearance of farmland bodes poorly for the future of ag. I don't believe in paying farmers not to grow crops. But farmers who are actually producing need to have lower property taxes and other incentives to farm instead of sell to developers. The small acreage, alternative farmer and the agri-tourism people who are giving folks an ag experience must be encouraged with reasonable, not punitive, policies.
- Recommend policy changes that limit property tax assessments on protected lands. As the remaining undeveloped farmland increases in value, it is almost certain that the tax assessments will also increase and place increased financial burden on farmers. This future concern is reflected in how these increased assessments will negatively impact the farmer's ability to make a living in farming. It is my view that since these farms will remain as farms and will not place demands on the County or State for public services, any increases in assessments should be prevented and thereby frozen at the time of the easement settlement date regardless of any infrastructure improvements that are made. This change in policy will ensure that historic and significant farm-related structures are not demolished because they cost too much to retain. Furthermore, if the increases in assessment value are inherently driven by the sales of farmland being developed in the marketplace, how can these comparable sales be used to determine the new assessment values for farms that cannot be developed? Until this question is answered, the State/County assessment policy will continue to be in direct conflict with the preservation goals of farmland and the agricultural industry.
- Change State Law that requires businesses to provide a buffer from residential development. As I have been informed by council, State law requires any business to provide a buffer from residential development. While this may make sense for a Wal-Mart, or other big box business, it does not make logical sense for agriculture. Since the medium that would provide the buffer is the same by which a farmer's living is made. We should avoid at all costs, any law that takes productive land out of production, due to impacts of residential use. Agricultural lands contribute to our economy, where residential developed lands create a draw on state and local resources. Montgomery County's Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB) has discussed the impact of residential subdivisions adjacent to production agriculture lands with our planning department on numerous occasions. The APAB believes that during the subdivision design phase, all efforts should be undertaken to consider placing a buffer from agricultural operations within a proposed subdivision. We need to make every effort to create an environment that is conducive for agricultural productivity and viability so the agricultural production lands can be maintained and protected for future generations. If the State law provides the impetus for a developer to require a buffer to residential development on agricultural lands, then perhaps its time to adopt an exemption for agricultural operations and require a minimum 100-foot buffer to be designed and constructed within the residential subdivision.
- Escalating land values are a huge threat to farming viability. Nutrient issues will be very important in coming years for Bay clean-up goals to be reached in 2010.

- Promote Ag as being a KEY land use for Quality of Life and Bay restoration opportunities.
- We need greater incentives for BMPs, such as cover crops and riparian buffers, stream fencing.
- Why are farmers plowing so close to the roadside ditches these days? Somebody better look at the implications of the “rental” basis of ag land in Maryland.
- Times have changed. More regulations are inevitable; they need to be sensible and supported with education.
- The State of Maryland needs to reaffirm its commitment to the University of Maryland – Land Grant University. The closing of the soils lab at College Park was a huge mistake and it compromises the Nutrient Management Program that the MDA enforces.



## Value Added, Diversification, and Alternative Enterprise Opportunities

<u>Order of Importance</u>	<u>Weighted Total</u>
Access to Markets	310
Processing Facilities	293
Bio-fuels	269
Agri-tourism and Agri-tertainment	231
Education, Public Relations, Promotions	223
Organics	182
Other	11

### *Comments under Access to Markets:*

- Maryland farms and farmers will only remain alive through profitability. Will it be development or crops?
- No business is a business until it turns a profitable sale. Market access, training, and availability is a major obstacle in the mind of most farmers. Help them to a profitable market and other issues evaporate.
- All of these choices are part of the “Access to Markets.” We are close to millions of consumers and need to provide products they consume using Maryland raw commodities (cheese, yogurt, ice cream, bread, etc). Local processing plants using local ingredients.
- We need to improve local markets (MD produced, MD processed) and strive to achieve competitiveness in international markets. We need to make consumers (especially youth/young adults) aware of what is involved in agriculture production (noise, dust, manure odors, and large machinery on roadways).
- I agree more producers should be sold locally—this is what consumers are asking for more and more. Processing facilities and bio-fuels are also hot topics.
- MDA expand marketing & markets (domestic & international). Expanded markets for bio-fuels.
- Who is going to buy value-added products when their output gets large? Need foreign outlets, e.g., for chicken.
- Invest in studies and analysis to identify opportunities and market competition for potentially profitable alternate enterprises.
- Getting the farm product to market with efficiency & with competitive edge & coupled with a powerful # 2 program above. Such steps require serious & credible investments.
- Farmers need to become more sophisticated marketers, both locally and on national and international levels. Processing of their products should be an important part of their marketing strategy.
- We are ideally located to grow food for the Eastern Megalopolis. Need to take better advantage of this location.

### *Comments under Processing Facilities:*

- Too much capital required to start processing facilities for the little added value.
- MD lacks processing facilities such as soybean extruding facilities and others that can add value through retained ownership. We have an advantage of a large population/retail outlet in the Mid-Atlantic. Let’s look at other states that have successful processing facilities even on a small scale.
- Need dairy processing plant to keep Maryland milk in the State. 73,000 cows in Maryland—how many acres does that take up? Production costs keep rising; we Dairy farmers need a higher price to stay in business.
- Small –medium size farms have long waiting times to get animals processed. This can impact profitability if delays occur at processing. Seems like demand for small-scale processing is strong — need to keep small processors viable.

- There is NO USDA processing facility for emus in MD. We transport them to DE, PA, or VA. Other “alternative meat”—goat, rabbit, bison, etc., have the same problem.
- We desperately need processing facilities for small animals such as chickens, goats, sheep, and rabbits.
- Public/private partnership with processors for R & D and new product development. NGMO—sorting, harvest and storage. Greater investment in international and domestic marketing programs.
- Farmers need to be able to add value to their products. Push Health Dept. to open up regulations beyond what has been recently done.
- Infrastructure that supports this industry is critically important, the further away these processing facilities lie, the increase in costs to the producer is felt. We need to develop, attract, and construct new facilities within the state or region to create a more conducive environment for ag producers.

*Comments under Bio-fuels:*

- By becoming less dependent on foreign oil and increasing demand for grain crops.
- No brainer—we have the technology and it is domestic. Remove taxes from these fuels & make them more competitive.
- New markets for products that consumers want & are using in a different form. The potential to replace fossil fuels with farm-based fuels is enormous.
- Bio-fuel technology provides additional options for the sale of commodities, reduces our dependence on foreign oil, and may allow on-farm distillation opportunities to decrease our fuel costs.
- Provide a local higher price for our grains. Also farmer investment to obtain part of finished product value.
- Another local market for our grain.
- The cost of fuel makes Bio-fuels sound more intriguing.
- Traditional agriculture covers a majority of the State’s farmland representing the critical mass of ag lands in production. Expanding Enterprise opportunities in Ethanol Production will help to preserve large tracts of farmland as demand for grain increases and this will help in the production of EPA mandated fuels and reduce dependency on foreign oil.
- Bio-fuels benefit everyone. A co-op of farmers by way of selling to processing plant and also sharing in profits of co-op.
- Will potentially increase demand for corn/soybean usage, which will increase their value. Will offer alternative petroleum products and more availability and supply, which can decrease the cost of gasoline and diesel that are major expenses.
- This would aid the greatest # of acres—provided there is sufficient supply of grains. Tie in cover crops with ground for Bio-Fuels?
- I’ve heard that Delmarva could become energy independent if it relies on biodiesel. Worcester County is using biodiesel in some equipment. I’ve heard that mustard seed can produce fuel, too. Energy independence should improve our economic development and will support local farms.
- Nation’s energy needs are increasing and the ability to use agricultural resources for this would be of enormous benefit.

*Comments under Agri-tourism and Agri-tertainment:*

- Tourism can expand income rapidly, but taxes on entertainment and zoning laws restrict this.
- The growth in suburban areas provides a large potential market for local farmers.
- People need something to do

*Comments under Education, Public Relations, Promotions:*

- Building positive awareness among consumers, voters, and citizens is more likely to improve profits, understanding, higher spending, better voting decisions—informed customers are better spenders

- The critical step is informing consumers about these other areas. Resources should be developed as single source information. Fact sheets/directories would be a tremendous resource for those promoting and educating.
- Many consumers would opt for “Maryland-grown” if such a program were actively promoted.
- We need to keep educating consumers of the value of plants/landscaping—but just as important we need to educate our students about careers in horticulture. MD ag needs to draw in young persons to ensure future sustainability.
- The general public needs to better understand the benefits of agriculture—all they are aware of are its negatives.
- Legislation is restricting ag media news—has to address rural activities.
- The general population needs to understand what today’s farmer is—each of the other items does not add up to full production ag.
- Consumers need better information about where to find local products.

*Comments under Organics:*

- Environmentally sensitive systems: Higher value crops grown in a more environmentally sensitive way (which does not necessarily imply organics) are key for public support and offer better prospects than trying to find ways to prop up row-crop prices.
- Because this is what people want.
- I live and work on the Eastern Shore. Here we have vast agricultural land, very near major metro areas (DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia). People want healthier, more nutritious foods, and organic farming can provide that for cities.

*Comments under Other:*

- Regulation
- Business Development Assistance

*General Comments:*

- MDA seems to be more interested in gathering statistics than in helping farmers. When they come on the farms, they assume you are guilty of something—now prove your innocent. Get processing facilities out of the Health Department and into MDA (PA has it in dept. of ag and not health dept.).
- Advocate on farm processing and artisan products that can be sold to affluent suburban/urban markets.
- I feel that at a national level we need policies that don’t force our farmers to compete with farmers in other countries.
- Cooperative Extension has historically provided the information distributed to producers. As technology changes, there are times that we need to get back to the basics of providing the one-on-one contact with producers that results in significant changes. It is not enough to just have contact (telephone, Internet, voice); we need to be on the farm to reach many of these folks.
- Need zoning regulations, a resource for agri-business development, and ag-tech training in our secondary schools. Need to require food contractors in state and local government institutions to purchase a portion of their food from local producers, i.e., farmers within 50 miles of the school or institute.

## Bio- Security

<u>Order of Importance</u>	<u>Weighted Total</u>	
Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs	251	
Plant Pests, Diseases and Insects	251	
Food Security/ Food Safety	239	
Inputs and Pesticide Management	192	
Farmer Education and Engagement		184
Other	6	

### *Comments under Animal Health and Diagnostic Labs:*

- Poultry is 1/3 of MD's cash farm income and without chickens there is no need for grain farmers. Keeping illegal aliens and whatever they bring with them is an important step. Homeland Security needs to do a better job along our borders.
- Labs must be fully staffed. Education can help prepare farmers for emergency situations.
- Monitor disease movement and outbreaks. Information updates and notification.
- State Veterinarians and state labs need to be closely monitored so that mis-diagnoses can be corrected. Also state wages need to be comparative to industry to ensure quality employees.
- More information provided to farmers to keep them aware of procedures and where to get assistance.
- Need to protect our food source so we can continue to feed the world.
- It seems the greatest threat to MD agriculture recently was the bird flu on Delmarva.

### *Comments under Plant Pests, Diseases and Insects:*

- Airborne diseases can be released fairly easily and are often too expensive to control. Strengthening of the cooperative extension service and monitoring of these diseases.
- Grass Roots effort—educate local farmers & extension people to be on the alert.
- Soybean rust is a good example of an exotic disease with the ability to wipe out an essential crop. Animals eat plants, so plant health has higher priority than animal health. ID and control of pests & diseases is crucial to the ag industries.
- With the ability to control pests and disease our food supply is vulnerable.
- Without protection of our crops our quality will suffer. Animal health issues are just as important.
- Managing pest & disease in an effective, economical manner.
- Most important because disease and pests can destroy whole crops. Many times plant loss due to pests is uninsurable. We must be diligent in our efforts to keep infected material and pests from coming into Maryland.
- Plants which are virus free and which have a high tolerance for disease would improve profitability and environment.
- Greatest area for human destruction.
- Risk reduction via research on preventative measures.

### *Comments under Food Security/Food Safety:*

- Improve consumer confidence. Market a safe/quality product.
- We need to understand what food security means and how it can work to farmer's advantage.
- If the public loses confidence in locally grown produce then we will have to worry about "what's for dinner?"
- We in agriculture MUST guarantee our customers a safe food supply. We must work with local, state and national health officials to keep abreast of all the old problems of animal production (TB, Bangs, mastitis) and the newer and yet undetermined problems.
- Citizens need to know their food is safe. MDA and County Government need to have a list of all the security precautions that are currently done so that we are all prepared when the media blows another case out of proportion and scares the general public.

- Contamination of processed food will affect a lot of people.
- Ensure that there is sufficient capacity to provide diagnostic and inspection support; certification.
- Food security is basic to survival and our free enterprise system across the board. Serious study of ways & means of ensuring such security & then implementing such measures as are necessary.
- Both livestock and crops need to be traceable to their source for the protection of producers and buyers.

*Comments under Inputs and Pesticide Management:*

- Because what you put on the land affects the environment including the Bay.
- We live in environmentally sensitive area and our ag production is close to urban populations. We need to avoid any appearance of a threat to environmental or human health.
- Both animal health and inputs are important to give consumers confidence in food.

*Comments under Farmer Education and Engagement:*

- Farmers know better than anyone when something is wrong within their production system. However, as new threats emerge are they made aware of new “red flags” to be on guard for?
- If there is ever a Bio-security issue, deal with it. Do not invent more government; it only costs us all time and money.
- Although all are important, the farmer is the first line of defense and needs to be educated on potential risks.
- Farmers need to be engaged in discussing these issues so that they can be part of the solution.
- Farmers are the first line of defense. They must be in a position to recognize animal diseases and pathogens that could contaminate our food supply. We must reduce our dependence on imported food thus ensuring a continued high quality supply for our citizens. Education and outreach through cooperative extension and our land grant universities is of high importance.
- Farmers need to understand the issue.

*Comments under Other:*

- Farmer & Citizen Awareness and Preparedness: Citizen buy-in. Recognizing they need to be prepared for events, understand value of preparedness & communication, knowing what to do before the event rather than during or after.

*General Comments:*

- We have policies and regulations in place that will provide a safe, high-grade food supply. The public needs to be aware of it and be willing to pay for “produced in Maryland with pride.”
- I work part-time at a restaurant where I handle most of the stock. It is amazing the amount of food we import. This is scary. We cannot afford to lose our agriculture base. Production agriculture cannot be resurrected overnight. A safe and adequate food supply is important to Homeland Security. Our “envioncrats” seem to have ignored the situation.
- Water quality, exotic animals, and pesticide use around the public. Educating the public.